

Trachtenberg concedes defeat in Montgomery

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September 15, 2010

Montgomery County Councilwoman Duchy Trachtenberg conceded defeat in the Democratic primary Wednesday, attributing her loss to public employee unions that were quick to claim credit for her downfall.

"She said she was a champion of working people, and then she got in office and became a champion of herself," said Walt Bader, chief negotiator for the Fraternal Order of Police. "That's why she lost."

Trachtenberg was the lone political casualty among incumbent council members, missing out on the final slot in November's general election by less than 2 percent of total votes cast.

Her fading union support became a liability in a tight, low-turnout election, where county employees, particularly teachers, were among the surest voters at the polls.

"I think the low turnout helped the unions and hurt her," said Councilman Phil Andrews, D-Gaithersburg/Rockville. "I was not surprised with the outcome."

Union members at multiple polling places told *The Washington Examiner* that defeating Trachtenberg was their main objective. It was a dramatic shift from her 2006 election, when unions constituted a major portion of her base.

She wore their disapproval as a badge of honor this time around -- even distributing "Most Wanted" fliers created by union members as part of her own campaign literature.

Trachtenberg did not return multiple calls for comment, but in a statement said, "I do not regret sounding the alarm about the growing imbalance between the compensation and benefits paid to county employees and the need to fund services for the county's most vulnerable populations. Montgomery County cannot keep asking its residents to pay

higher and higher taxes just to pay for higher government salaries while services decline."

To help close a \$1 billion budget gap, county officials froze salaries, stopped paying cost-of-living increases and instituted furloughs for all non-school workers. Trachtenberg's "tough stance" on employee benefits and compensation was essentially the centerpiece of her campaign in recent weeks.

And her loss was challenger Hans Riemer's gain. In a somewhat surprising turn, the former outreach coordinator for President Obama's campaign landed the second most votes among Democrats seeking at-large seats.

"I think a lot of people wanted to give a new guy a shot," he said, reflecting on the upset. "People really felt that they could take a chance on me."

Less than 20 percent of the county's registered voters showed up at the polls. Absentee ballots will be counted in coming days, but there is not enough remaining to affect the contest.